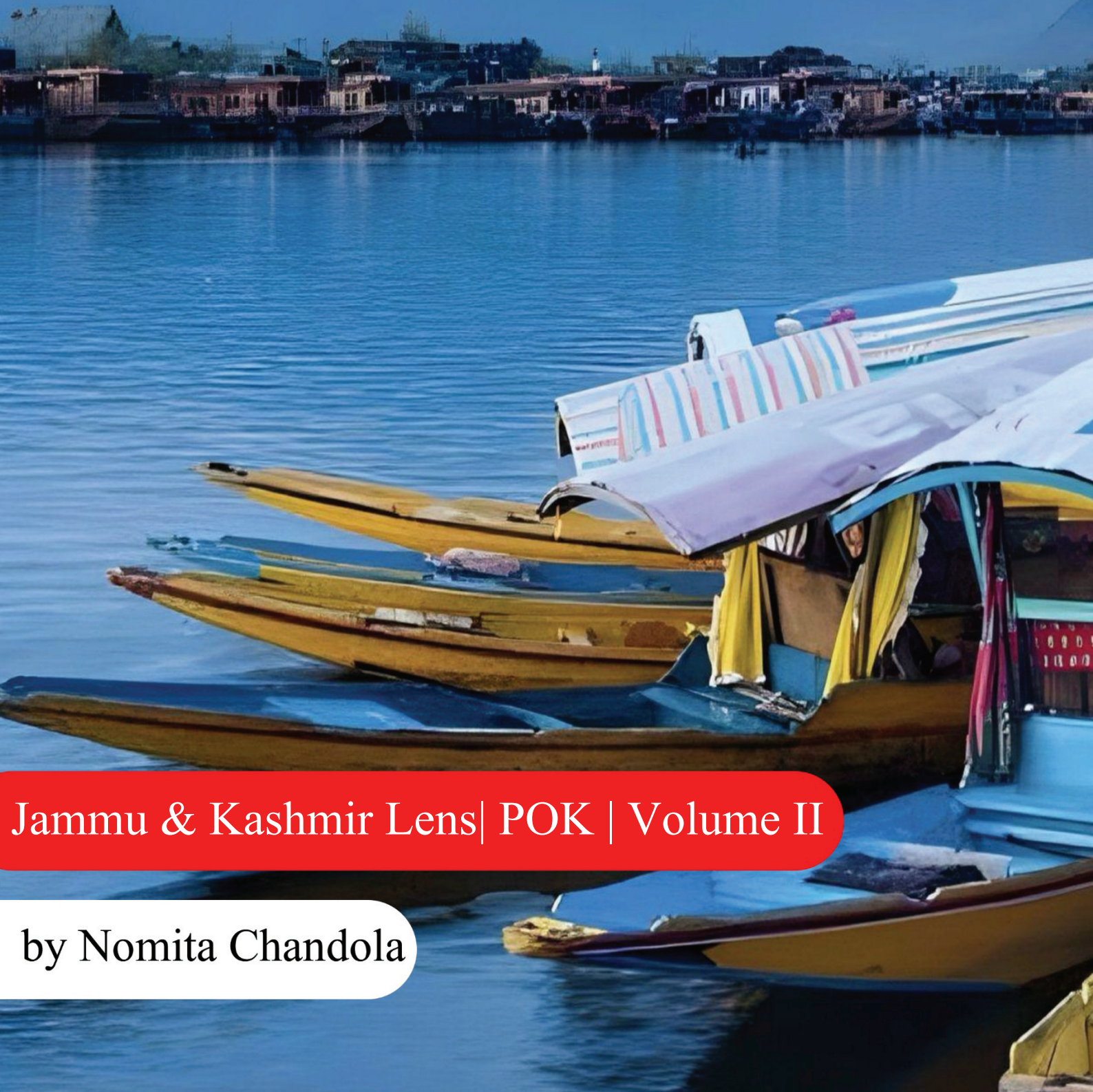


# CLAWS Newsletter



Jammu & Kashmir Lens| POK | Volume II

by Nomita Chandola

## **J&K NEWS**

### **1. Fresh exchange of fire reported in LoC in Poonch (The Hindu, Feb 16)**

A brief exchange of fire occurred between Indian and Pakistani troops along the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch's Gulpur sector on February 16<sup>th</sup>. Pakistani troops opened fire at an Indian post around 11 a.m., prompting retaliation from the Indian Army. No casualties were reported. The incident comes amid ongoing ceasefire violations along the LoC, despite the renewed ceasefire agreement between India and Pakistan in 2021. Earlier this month, two Indian soldiers, including a Captain, were killed in Akhnoor, while two others were injured in Rajouri and Poonch. Recent cross-border incidents included an IED explosion killing two soldiers and cross-border firing injuring two others. Indian forces retaliated strongly, inflicting "heavy casualties" on the Pakistani side. While ceasefire violations have reduced in recent years, tensions along the LoC remain high.

### **2. Omar Abdullah warns of growing water crisis in J&K (The Kashmir Monitor, Feb 19)**

Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has raised concerns over an impending water crisis, stating that the issue has been building up for years. In a post on X, he emphasized that the government alone cannot tackle the crisis and urged residents to adopt water conservation measures. Abdullah stressed the need for a proactive approach to water management and announced plans to review measures by the Jal Shakti (PHE) Department to address the situation. He also intends to engage with the people of J&K in the coming months to discuss collective solutions for water conservation.

### **3. Security Forces prevented major terror plot, Recover IEDs in South Kashmir (The Tribune, Feb 19)**

Security forces in Jammu and Kashmir averted potential terror attacks by recovering and destroying two Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in Shopian and Pulwama districts. The Chinara Corps confirmed that a joint operation by the Army and J&K Police successfully neutralized an IED in Chitragam, Shopian. In a separate operation Nagbari, Pulwama, security forces, acting on intelligence inputs, recovered another IED, which was safely destroyed on-



site. These operations highlight ongoing terror threats in South Kashmir and the vigilance of security forces in preventing attacks.

**4. Amit Shah orders full implementation of New Criminal Laws in J&K by April (NDTV, Feb 19)**

Home Minister Amit Shah chaired a review meeting on implementing new criminal laws in Jammu and Kashmir, attended by Lt Governor Manoj Sinha, CM Omar Abdullah, and senior officials. Shah directed the full implementation by April 2025, stressing technology use for speedy justice and police accountability. He urged efficient chargesheet filing, National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS) adoption, and Trial in Absentia provisions. With terror incidents declining, he emphasized citizen rights protection and preventing misuse of laws. Regular progress reviews were also mandated. CM Omar Abdullah acknowledged areas needing improvement and highlighted the government's role in raising awareness.

**5. India slams Pakistan at UNSC, calls it “Global Epicentre of Terrorism” (Hindustan Times, Feb 19)**

At a UNSC meeting, India's envoy Parvathaneni Harish rebuked Pakistan after its Deputy PM Mohammed Ishaq Dar raised the Jammu and Kashmir issue, calling it an “open wound.” Harish labelled Pakistan the “global epicentre of terrorism,” citing its support for over 20 UN-listed terror groups, including Jaish-e-Mohammed. Rejecting Pakistan's claims, he reaffirmed that J&K is an integral part of India and highlighted recent elections as proof of a thriving democracy in the region. Harish also accused Pakistan of spreading misinformation and urged the UNSC not to entertain baseless allegations.

**6. Omar Abdullah rules out talks with Pakistan amid rising terror (Business Standard, Feb 20)**

J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah ruled out India-Pakistan talks, citing increased terror attacks and Pakistan's interference in the region. In a BBC interview, he stated that recent incidents could not have happened without external support. Government data shows 60 terror-related incidents in 2024, causing 122 deaths. Abdullah, once a proponent of dialogue, now insists Pakistan must address India's concerns before any talks. Previously, he and his father,

Farooq Abdullah, backed engagement, quoting former PM Vajpayee on the permanence of neighbours. However, the surge in violence has shifted his stance, prioritizing security over diplomacy.

**7. Ex-Hizbul terrorist arrested in J&K's Reasi after 18 years (Deccan Herald, Feb 20)**

Security forces arrested Anwari Ali Chouhan alias Jamsheer, a former Hizbul Mujahideen terrorist, in Reasi, Jammu and Kashmir, after an 18-year-long hunt. Chouhan, a resident of Gujjar-Kothian Talwara, joined the militant group in 2001 and was active for seven years before going underground. Authorities had been tracking him for years, and his arrest is seen as a significant achievement in counterterrorism efforts. Security agencies continue to investigate his past activities and possible links with terror networks.

**8. India criticizes Turkish president Erdogan's remarks on Kashmir (Deccan Herald, Feb 21)**

India has strongly condemned recent comments made by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan regarding the Kashmir issue during his visit to Pakistan. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) labelled Erdogan's statements as "unwarranted" and an interference in India's internal affairs, asserting that they violate India's territorial integrity and sovereignty. The MEA emphasized that such remarks are "unacceptable" and have lodged a formal protest with the Turkish government. This incident marks a continuation of diplomatic tensions between India and Turkey, particularly concerning Turkey's stance on Jammu and Kashmir.

**9. India raises cross-border firing, terror issues at a flag meeting with Pakistan (The Tribune, Feb 21)**

India and Pakistan held a brigade commander-level flag meeting at Chakkan-Da-Bagh in Poonch, Jammu and Kashmir on February 21<sup>st</sup>, to address recent incidents of cross-border firing, infiltration attempts, and smuggling of weapons and narcotics. India strongly protested against unprovoked firing and terror activities, urging Pakistan to honor the 2021 ceasefire agreement. The 75-minute meeting, held in a congenial atmosphere, focused on maintaining peace along the Line of Control (LoC). The meeting followed recent attacks, including an IED blast in Akhnoor that killed two Indian soldiers, and separate firing and landmine explosions

in Rajouri and Poonch, injuring multiple personnel. Meanwhile, an explosion occurred near the zero line in Digwar sector, though no casualties were reported.

**10. CM Omar Abdullah advocates economic growth and sustainable investments at Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) J&K annual session (Brighter Kashmir, Feb 22)**

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah attended the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) J&K Annual Session 2025, themed “AMAZING J&K: Aspiring for New Growth Goals.” The event brought together business leaders, entrepreneurs, and industry experts to discuss strategies for boosting J&K’s economic growth and industrial development.

Key takeaways from the CM’s address:

- **Enhancing Economic Competitiveness:** Abdullah emphasized the importance of such forums in creating business opportunities, improving efficiency, and fostering global linkages.
- **Upcoming Budget Inputs:** He invited suggestions from stakeholders for the J&K Budget, focusing on industries, tourism, and overall public welfare.
- **Sustainable Entrepreneurship:** Advocated for responsible business practices to ensure long-term economic sustainability.
- **Regulated Investments:** Stressed the need for land investment safeguards to protect agricultural land while promoting economic growth, similar to Himachal Pradesh's policies.
- **Long-Term Business Viability:** Proposed mechanisms to assess businesses' sustainability beyond ten years and lauded local industries for their resilience without over-reliance on government subsidies.
- **Ease of Doing Business:** Pushed for a genuine single-window clearance system, addressing bureaucratic hurdles, particularly in forest and environmental clearances.

**11. J&K CM Omar Abdullah reaffirms commitment to statehood restoration (ANI, Feb 24)**

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has reiterated his commitment to restoring the region's statehood. He emphasized that governance under the Union Territory framework

will not address certain issues, therefore, a state administration is important. This follows the revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status in August 2019, which led to its reorganization into two union territories: Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh. In November 2024, the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, under Abdullah's leadership, passed a non-binding resolution seeking the restoration of partial autonomy previously granted under Article 370. The resolution called upon the Indian government to engage in dialogue with the region's elected representatives to reinstate its special status and constitutional guarantees. Despite opposition from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which maintains that the semi-autonomous status is a closed chapter, Abdullah and his party, the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (JKNC), continue to advocate for the region's autonomy and statehood.

### **12. Kashmir's tourism affected due to dry winter (Deccan Herald, Feb 24)**

Kashmir is experiencing a significant downturn in its tourism industry due to an exceptionally dry winter with minimal snowfall. This climatic condition has led to around 50% reduction in tourist arrivals, particularly affecting popular destinations like Gulmarg. This situation also led to the postponement of the 5th Khelo India Winter Games, originally scheduled for February 22-25, 2025, in Gulmarg. The local population has also been affected due to water scarcity and the decline in agricultural productivity in the region.

### **13. Panchayat elections in J&K after 7 years (The Kashmiriyat, Feb 24)**

Jammu and Kashmir is preparing to hold panchayat elections between April and May, marking the first such polls since 2018. The elections, expected to be conducted in multiple phases, aim to strengthen grassroots democracy and improve local governance. Authorities are making security and logistical arrangements to ensure a smooth process, with a formal election schedule likely to be announced soon. The phased approach will help manage polling stations efficiently, making this a crucial step in enhancing village-level representation in the region.

### **14. Pakistan and Azerbaijan strengthen bilateral ties, discuss Kashmir issue (Dunya News, Feb 25)**

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif praised Azerbaijan's support for Kashmir's self-determination, citing UN resolutions, during his February 24-25 visit. He and President Ilham Aliyev discussed bilateral trade, investment, and strategic cooperation, with Aliyev set to visit Pakistan

in April 2025. Both sides reaffirmed multilateral collaboration and signed key agreements. Sharif also attended a Business Forum. The visit reinforced strong Pakistan-Azerbaijan relations.

**15. Border Security Force (BSF) strengthens security along India-Pakistan border in Punjab and Jammu (Kashmir Reader, Feb 25)**

BSF has tightened its security in India-Pakistan border in Jammu and Punjab with more manpower and nine tactical headquarters around vulnerable border posts. The western command has been actively deploying maximum intelligence and operational resources to these bases. BSF has been vigorously neutralizing Pakistani intruders, arresting Indian smugglers and Pakistani nationals. The aim of strengthening security along the border is to control cross-border infiltration and invasion of drones carrying drugs and ammunition from Pakistan.

**16. Terrorists attack army vehicle in Rajouri (TOI, Feb 26)**

Terrorists started fire on an army vehicle in the Sunderbani area of Rajouri, Jammu and Kashmir, prompting troops to retaliate. No casualties were reported, and a cordon and search operation was launched to neutralize the attackers, who were believed to be hiding in a forested infiltration route. These incidents come amid heightened security measures following recent terrorist attacks and infiltration attempts along the LoC in Jammu and Kashmir.



## **PoK NEWS**

### **17. Pakistan Occupied Gilgit-Baltistan (PoGB) residents experience poor infrastructure and contaminated water (ANI, Feb 17)**

Residents are facing significant challenges due to inadequate infrastructure and contaminated water supplies. The region's underdeveloped infrastructure has led to difficulties in accessing clean drinking water, with many communities relying on polluted sources. This situation has resulted in widespread health issues, including waterborne diseases, adversely affecting the quality of life for locals. The community is calling for immediate government intervention to improve infrastructure and ensure access to safe drinking water.

### **18. Civil society leader criticizes PoGB's education department (ANI, Feb 23)**

A civil society leader has criticized the PoGB's education department for its failures, highlighting issues such as inadequate infrastructure, teacher shortages, and lack of educational resources. These shortcomings have adversely affected the region's educational standards, prompting calls for immediate reforms and increased investment to improve the quality of education in Gilgit-Baltistan.

### **19. PoGB Council calls on Pakistani PM to address Diamer-Bhasha Dam protests (ANI, Feb 27)**

The Provisional Government of Gilgit-Baltistan (PoGB) Council has urged Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to take immediate action regarding ongoing protests against the Diamer-Bhasha Dam project. Local communities have expressed concerns over inadequate compensation for displaced residents and potential environmental impacts. The PoGB Council emphasizes the need for transparent dialogue between the government and affected communities to address grievances and ensure fair treatment.

### **20. Gilgit-Baltistan inaugurates first public-sector Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) (Pamir Times, Feb 27)**

Gilgit-Baltistan has inaugurated its first public-sector NICU at Shaheed Saifur Rahman Government Teaching Hospital/Mother and Child Health Complex in Gilgit. The inauguration was led by Chief Secretary Abrar Ahmed Mirza and Secretary Health Asif Ullah Khan, who

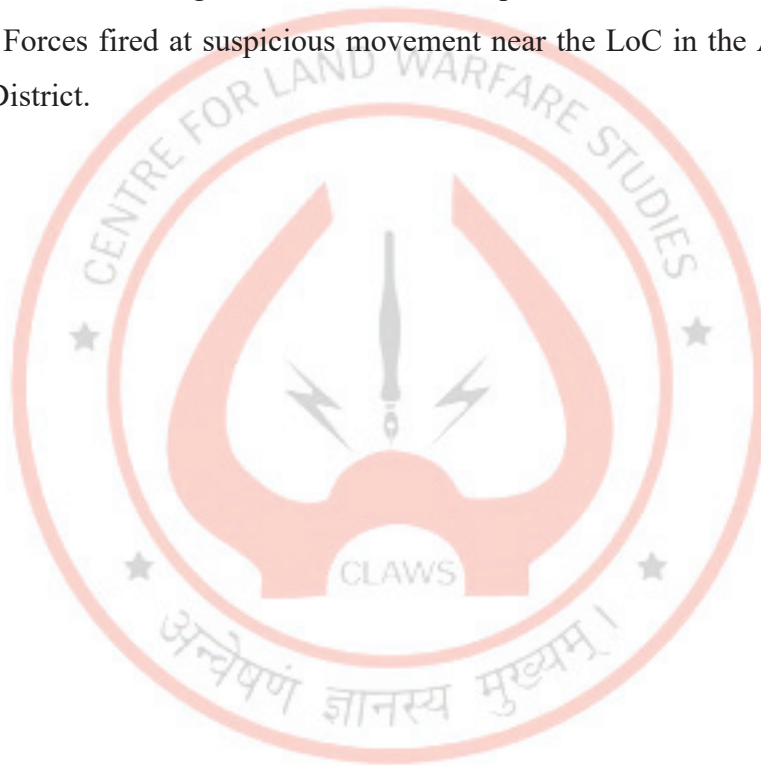


emphasized the facility's crucial role in providing specialized care for critically ill newborns. As the first fully equipped NICU in the region, it is designed to offer advanced medical care, ensuring better neonatal health services. The unit was completed in record time with support from various donors and is equipped with state-of-the-art medical technology, staffed by highly trained professionals. Meeting international healthcare standards, the NICU is expected to significantly enhance newborn care and provide life-saving interventions for infants in need.

## TERRORISM

- An Indian Army post in the Gulpur sector of Poonch District came under fire from a forested area near the Line of Control (LoC), believed to be a sniper attack. Indian soldiers retaliated, and the exchange lasted briefly, with no damage reported.
- A joint patrol party of the police and army detected and neutralized a pressure cooker IED planted by terrorists in the Chitragam area of Shopian District. Another IED was detected and destroyed in the Pinglish area of Pulwama District.
- A terrorist hideout was busted in the Kawala Forest area of Samba District, leading to the recovery of an AK rifle magazine, 29 live rounds, and explosive powder.
- In the Sunderbani sector of Rajouri District, Army troops opened fire after detecting suspicious movement along the LoC, with no casualties reported.
- Security Forces launched widespread anti-terror operations across seven districts, targeting hideouts and Over Ground Workers (OGWs), particularly in Rajouri, Poonch, Udhampur, Kathua, Doda, and Kishtwar. During one operation, two suspected foreign terrorists were reportedly roaming in the Poonch district, leading to intensified searches.
- A rusted shell was recovered from a forest area in the Surankote area of Poonch District.
- The Special Operations Group (SOG) uncovered a terrorist hideout in the Simbli-Shajroo forest of Reasi District, seizing Under Barrel Grenade Launchers (UBGLs), AK rifle magazines, assorted ammunition, and detonators.
- Security Forces also launched extensive search operations near the LoC in Poonch District following intelligence reports of terrorist movement.
- A long-wanted Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM) militant, Anwar Ali Chouhan, was arrested in Reasi District after evading capture for 18 years. He had been involved in multiple terror-related incidents, including a 2006 grenade attack.

- The Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, Manoj Sinha, stated that local recruitment in terrorist groups had dropped to zero and that no ‘commander’ of any outfit was alive in Kashmir.
- The army chief emphasized that India remains assertive in its dealings with Pakistan and is prepared to respond aggressively if necessary, highlighting the impact of the abrogation of Article 370 in reducing terrorism and militant recruitment.
- Police attached properties worth lakhs belonging to two Pakistan-based absconding terrorist handlers in Kupwara District.
- An army vehicle was fired upon by unidentified terrorists in Phull village near the LoC in Rajouri District, though no casualties were reported.
- Security Forces fired at suspicious movement near the LoC in the Akhnoor sector of Jammu District.



## About the Author

**Nomita Chandola** is a dedicated scholar in International Relations, with a strong academic foundation and a passion for understanding complex global issues. She recently earned her master's degree in International Relations from the University of Leeds, where she focused on modules such as global governance and climate security. Prior to this, she completed her bachelor's degree in Political Science with a minor in Economics from Kamla Nehru College, University of Delhi.

Currently, Nomita is a Research Assistant at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies, where she delves into critical issues of strategic affairs and geopolitical dynamics. Her primary area of interest lies in South Asian studies, emphasizing security dynamics and their intersections with global politics. She aspires to pursue a PhD to further explore these themes. With a keen eye for policy analysis and research, Nomita aims to contribute meaningfully to the academic and policy discourse on international security and regional stability.



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